Identity politics and nationalism in the post-Cold War era: a critical approach to understanding mutual hostilities.

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IDENTITY POLITICS AND NATIONALISM IN THE POST-COLD WAR ERA: A CRITICAL APPROACH TO UNDERSTANDING MUTUAL HOSTILITIES

A Thesis Presented

by

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IDENTITY POLITICS AND NATIONALISM
IN THE POST-COLD WAR ERA:
A CRITICAL APPROACH TO
UNDERSTANDING MUTUAL HOSTILITIES

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The most widely discussed explanations of ethnic conflict are, at best... wrong. Ethnic conflict is not caused directly by inter-group differences, "ancient hatreds" and centuries-old feuds... Nor were ethnic passions, long bottled up by repressive communist regimes, simply uncorked by the end of the Cold War. (Lake and Rothchild, 1996)

Reflecting on international affairs in the 20th century demands attention to the dangerous waves of oppression which resulted in the persecution of many people on the basis of their political identity. Whether we recall the Holocaust, the territorial disputes between Palestinians and the state of Israel or more recently the mass displacements of the Bosnian war, the extent to which identity has been used as a political tool could overwhelm any scholar or practitioner of international relations. For this reason it could be argued that the concept of identity is nothing new to the discipline of International Relations (IR) as the well as the practice of it (ir). Indeed, it has revealed itself throughout the 20th century. Now, however, as nation-states change, borders shift and migrants travel with greater rapidity our awareness of the importance of studying political identity is burgeoning.

A traditional interpretation of the post-Cold War world holds that the communist order, namely vis-à-vis the Soviet Union, stifled any identity-based conflicts which naturally would have occurred in the absence of a central organizing power (Green, 1994: 145-146). Hence, recent identity/nationalist-based conflicts since 1989/1991 in areas such as the Balkans and Baltics reflect inevitable consequences. This project seeks to challenge such an interpretation by arguing that there is nothing “natural” about these conflicts. Rather, the fall of the communist order has allowed regional political/economic elites to strive for international/regional attention, and in so doing they have mobilized their populations on the basis of chosen factors such as identity (including, for example, qualities such as race, ethnicity, religion, language, customs, etc.).
Why have these elites been seeking so much attention? One possibility is that without the minimal material protection granted by the communist order (Green, 1994: 146), individual nation-states now are in need of important resources—be they physical or intellectual (e.g. leadership, civil society promotion, etc.). This has resulted in interstate competition, which in several instances has been based upon the choice of identity, a choice that I hold to be more arbitrary than natural. Nevertheless, I acknowledge in this paper the significance of questioning why the decision to rely upon identity for mobilization has been so popular in certain regions of the post-Cold War world.

In keeping with the central argument of this writing, case studies have been taken from the Balkans and the Baltics with respect to identity politics and nationalism. Prevalent in this work is a constructivist approach to understanding identity-based conflicts. Nevertheless, in order to frame the need for such an approach it is necessary to revisit some of the texts which are considered fundamental to the dominant aspects of the discourse of IR. However, this does not demand another tiring analysis of classical IR texts. Rather, I shall give attention to their failures by virtue of what is absent in them with respect to identity politics and nationalism. This of course requires some critical attention to the substance of these texts without regurgitating all of their propositions or reviving familiar debates.

Realism, neorealism and neoliberal institutionalism still tend to remain part of the dominant theoretical approaches to understanding and even practicing international relations. Certainly, critical theorists of IR have responded by providing a wealth of studies challenging the dominant discourse with respect to identity politics and nationalism. For this reason it will be important to pause and chronicle how a reaction to the dominant discourse has evolved. This requires giving attention to texts such as Morgenthau’s Politics Among Nations, Waltz’ Theory of International Politics and institutionalist literature.

As I argue with respect to my case studies, national and regional leaders in the Balkans and Baltics, especially since the end of the Cold War, have been mobilizing their
populations on the basis of identity. This has led in many instances to nationalist assertions which themselves have fueled physical conflicts (Farnen, 1994: 49-50). Prominent examples include the former Yugoslavia in the Balkans and Latvia in the Baltics, though the Latvian situation has differed in substance and has not erupted into the exact same type of violence that has occurred in the Balkans. This does not imply, however, that the Latvian case is less serious or less volatile.

Although regional/national elites often have relied upon historical conflicts, myths and other phenomena in order to drive present-day disputes, I argue that many of the current conflicts represent a hybridization of the old and the new, suggesting that identity-based disputes do not represent renewals of ancient, timeless hatreds. Rather, they manifest themselves as the efforts of leaders/elites seeking to preserve their status and the security of those whom they allegedly represent. If historical progression were perfectly linear there would exist a direct descent of customs/teachings preserving those “ancient” hatreds. However, history and subsequent generations do not perfectly maintain the past. To a noticeable degree the past has been re-presented to the masses in such a way that events have been retained selectively, without complete accuracy and certainly without a confidant level of objectivity. (Objectivity tends to be lost at an early stage.) Nevertheless, it is not my intention to introduce a paradigm which universalizes the study of identity-based conflict. Such conflict has not always occurred in all regions of the post-Cold War world. Part of this research will help to explain how it has occurred in some.

For the purpose of this writing, “identity groups” will encompass individuals at the sub-national, national or transnational level who use a wide variety of characteristics in order to distinguish themselves from other groups. Examples of such characteristics include but by no means are limited to race, ethnicity, religion, language, customs, etc. Furthermore, these variables are prone to change (Walker in Drobizheva, 1996: 3), meaning that sometimes certain characteristics assert themselves over the others. In fact, it could be
argued that identity could be based on some very obscure characteristics if a particular political situation or event demanded adherence to them. For instance, traditional determinants of identity such as ethnicity could be overridden by factors such as class or educational level. This, however, is just one possibility.

Since an array of scholars and policymakers still adheres to the theories propagated by these and related texts, and since this endeavor deals with the post-communist world, it is still relevant to pose a challenge in response to the traditional texts. However, it is also important to note that thinking in IR has not followed a perfect linear progression, for example, from Morgenthau to the critical theorists. To the contrary, a number of materials taken from various historical periods is pertinent to my argument. Critical theorists have made a tremendous effort in debunking myths with respect to the artificial nature of identity construction as well as the nationalism(s) that it can fuel. Yet it is still important to contrast these efforts with the traditional approaches in order to demonstrate how the dominant approaches in IR are defective and even dangerous for practitioners of international politics.

But how do we know that the traditional approaches are still dominant? One response is “just observe”—that is, just observe the current foreign policies of states, many of which outwardly call for diplomacy and peace but ultimately choose militarism/force/sanctions when they allege that negotiation has failed (even if “negotiation” never really took place). A quick glance at the classical texts I have chosen prompts any scholar to ask why they have been selected given their marginal if not nonexistent treatment of my topic. But this is exactly why such texts must be analyzed. They remain as fundamental works within the discipline of IR yet despite the expectation that identity would be deemed a part of the discourse, it is absent in them. Therefore, I provide a review of three other texts which should serve as a transition toward the approach this writing takes in relation to identity-based conflict in the post-communist world. These texts also serve as a prelude and a foundation for the argument that is being advanced.
Although a better understanding of constructivist approaches will be made as this writing progresses, at the least I take constructivism to include a process of understanding how concepts, meanings and (socio-political) phenomena are created through an intersubjective process (Wendt, 1992: 396), usually between a minimum of two actors at the individual or group level. Constructivism also asserts the role of structures at the international level as they relate to the creation of state interests (1994: 385). However, by no means should it be assumed that interests or identities are pre-given or prior to social interaction. Rendering an almost “Lacanian” description of identity formation, Wendt discusses how actors construct their identities in relation to the existence of others (1992: 404). Hence this project employs, in part, a sociological (and to an extent a psychological) approach to understanding international relations. It focuses upon intertwining theory with practice and demonstrating the close relationship between both, in spite of existing perceptions which are reluctant to address the role of theory.

1 Lacanian psychological theory, for example, addresses the role of self and other, and how the self comes to be defined by its relation to the other. See Jacques Lacan, “The Mirror Stage as Formative of the Function of the I as Revealed in Psychoanalytic Experience” in Robert Con Davis and Ronald Schleifer, Contemporary Literary Criticism. White Plains, NY: Longman Publishing Group, 1994, pp. 381-386.
CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF CLASSICAL AND TRANSITIONAL TEXTS

Because a plurality of policymakers continues to practice international relations on the basis of ideas stemming from the traditional theoretical approaches to IR, it is necessary to give attention to the texts representing them. I use the term “traditional” because they have created a dominant tradition reflected in the practice and theory of international relations, especially since the end of the Second World War. Such texts reveal that their principles have contributed to a self-fulfilling prophecy in which practitioners of international politics believe that they provide the soundest approaches. However, when their policy choices generate adverse consequences, policymakers, instead of challenging these approaches actually adhere to and perpetuate them despite the flaws of their logic.

Consider, for example, Politics Among Nations. This work is treated as a “core” text of IR but reveals its deficiencies regarding identity politics largely by what is absent in the text. This is achieved through its insistence upon the state as a fundamental, primary actor (e.g. in a world of bipolarity, multipolarity, etc.). The end result is that the text overlooks identity because the concept, if it were even vaguely considered by Morgenthau, becomes reduced to state identity without discussing sub-national or transnational identities. Instead, the concept of the “national interest” (Morgenthau, 1960: 562) tends to engulf the concept of identity. Hence, an otherwise elaborate text such as this actually reveals itself to be simplistic and uncritical. Furthermore, it contains a rather pessimistic outlook upon world politics and human nature, which I argue has contributed to present-day cynicism toward world affairs (e.g. conflict in the Balkans and the suggestion that a resolution is almost impossible). This work is a strong starting-point for the self-fulfilling prophecies of IR. One such means of achieving this relates to Morgenthau’s analysis of the status quo and the importance he accords to it. The closest treatment of identity occurs through his brief discussion of “nationalism” (1960: 368), which again tends to manifest itself as a concept
applicable to the territorial state. My project, however, concerns itself with identities not exclusively at the national level but at the sub-national level as well. *Politics Among Nations* is less useful for such an endeavor given that it hardly takes account of various levels of identity-based groups. Yet many present-day practitioners of international affairs adhere faithfully to the realist doctrine to the point where Morgenthau’s work becomes a standard IR textbook.

It certainly does not aid the cause of scrutinizing identity that Morgenthau defends the primacy of power as it is applied to international politics. Although the definition and understanding of this concept are quite murky it can be seen that nation-states continue to assert their actions on the basis of what to them are fundamental concepts, such as power. This is problematic, for it can lead to mutual misunderstandings and exhibitions of national hubris in order to promote an otherwise relative concept.

Moving years ahead, *Theory of International Politics*, respected as the founding text of neorealism, is especially insensitive to the intricacies of identity because of Waltz’ insistence upon the “advantages” (Waltz, 1979: 161) of bipolarity for a stable world. Again, such a conception overlooks multiple and transnational identities. The attempt to create a “science” (1979: 7) of international politics based upon microeconomic theory and structural causes/factors negates the intersubjective nature of identity formation between states and sub-national groups, or states and other states. In a sense, such an approach makes identity formation almost deterministic. Similar to Morgenthau, Waltz builds his theory upon ideas which are not as conceptually concrete as they are presented, such as “interest” and “power”—both of which can be redefined to demonstrate how sub-national and transnational identities are manipulated by these concepts. Furthermore, if neorealist theory as represented in *Theory of International Politics* were as logically sound as it is claimed to be, identity formation within nation-states would be far more predictable than it has been. The fact that crises such as those in the Baltics and Balkans have occurred implies the weakness
of neorealist propositions. Distinct identities, as those possessed by members within periphery states would become further marginalized by state efforts to take cover beneath the hegemonial umbrella of one of the major powers in a bipolar world. The result would be the diminishing of identity-based conflicts—if neorealist theory were as powerful as its followers claim that it is.

In considering "The Promise of Institutionalist Theory" by Keohane and Martin, one finds an article that is very concise as it spells out some of the dominant/accepted viewpoints of institutionalism. However, based upon this assessment it can be seen that institutionalist theory also is problematic with respect to identity politics and the politics of identity. Institutionalism tends to be perceived as conditional, meaning that state engagement in institutions depends upon numerous factors including those related to self-interest and rational utility maximizing. Moreover, it explicitly rejects the value of critical appraisals of international affairs. While frowned upon by realist tenets, institutionalist theory still seeks to apply various realist principles, or to show "under what conditions realist propositions are valid" (Keohane and Martin, 1995: 42). It relies upon an application of logic which in international relations often times is revealed as illogic. With respect to identity politics, neoliberal institutionalism inadequately addresses issues related to sub-national and transnational, as well as changing, identities. Given that institutionalism tends to focus upon the incentives of states with respect to participation in institutions (1995: 44), one can immediately notice the flaws of this theory with respect to identity politics. An institutionalist might argue for example that no state would allow itself to enter into an institution which might heavily tamper with its collectivized identity or identities. But since institutionalism still privileges the role of state self-interest this is heavily problematic when considering issues of identity, especially if competing identity groups complicate the definition of their state’s self-interest. Empirically speaking, the post WWII era has
demonstrated that state interests do in fact change. For instance, no longer do Japan or Germany tend to promote a militaristic agenda on the world stage (Ruggie, 1998: 863).

The following texts represent theoretical approaches which still remain subordinate to the dominant ones largely because the dominant approaches stand to be threatened by their challenging propositions. It is here that one finds a “dominant/emergent” (Williams in Con Davis and Schleifer, 1980: 460) relationship between the traditional and the transitional. This type of association arises when one kind of practice, in this case an academic one, encounters another practice which poses a challenge to it. In such a scenario the dominant practice (via its adherents) acknowledges the presence of the emergent. However, in an attempt to resist the emergent practice adherents of the dominant one often try to subsume or stifle it (1980: 460-461). When translating this into the discourse of IR it is evident that scholars of the traditional approaches have attempted to stifle the transitional ones by actually choosing to address them. Although such scholars will give some credence and attention to the ideas propounded by their colleagues, ultimately they seek to reassert the superiority of the traditional theoretical approaches. This is how, in spite of the robust critical studies literature, mainstream literature of IR has continued to retain its preeminence. Ruggie, for example, introduces another dimension into the marginalization of critical studies, or more specifically constructivist thought, by arguing that theorists of IR have maintained a highly “narrow” (Ruggie, 1998: 880) outlook on the nature of the Social Sciences. Given the constructivist divergence from realist and neoliberal causal mechanisms (1998: 878-880), it is apparent that scholars of the more traditional approaches have hesitated to welcome the research of critical studies.

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2 The term “transitional” is not meant to imply the creation of a teleology but rather a movement away from the established discourse and practice of international relations.
In *World of Our Making*, Nicholas Onuf advances some of the elements of *structuration* theory as he attempts to build a constructivist theory of rules and rule in the international realm. This text is a valuable starting-point for the presentation of the idea that individuals and society are mutually constitutive. Carefully, Onuf warns however that despite this claim the process of mutual constitution is not “done wholly out of mind” (Onuf, 1989: 40). Such a claim is highly applicable to this project, as it implies that agency and interests are not pre-given, but that individuals and society nonetheless do not have complete command of their self-formation. Although he agrees with the post-structuralist emphasis of the role played by logocentrism in social interactions, Onuf distances himself from post-structuralism, which he accepts as a more “radical” (1989: 40) position. This work relates highly to my treatment of identity politics, for it suggests that the rules by which social groups abide (or are expected to abide) are social constructs with no predetermined source.

As I argue, the concept of rule also is a social construct which does not possess an absolute grounding point for its meaning. Onuf explicitly rejects the rigidity created by the reliance upon binaries in order to describe the different categories of rules and rule. And although he posits an alternative in which there are three categories for each (Onuf, 1989: 291), I am skeptical as to whether he too has formed a somewhat rigid paradigm. Nevertheless, *World of Our Making* articulates the highly constructed nature of international relations, and hence assists in presenting the notion that there is nothing natural or inevitable about conflicts such as those based upon identity.

Alexander Wendt’s “Collective Identity Formation and the International State” relies as well upon a more sociological approach to understanding international relations. It provides much-needed attention to the concept of intersubjectivity between actors, and more broadly addresses the role of social interaction among them. This essay veers from the

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3 Onuf builds upon, in large part, structuration theory as presented by Anthony Giddens in texts such as *The Constitution of Society*.
paradigm of rational-choice acting and attempts to account for the means by which actors' identities and their political/social choices are formed. Moreover, it challenges neorealist presuppositions about the fixed, predetermined nature of state-level interests. In this regard Wendt’s piece establishes a foundation for the idea that interests do not necessarily fall into a neat, determinable set of patterns.

*Challenging Boundaries: Global Flows, Territorial Identities* is a tremendously valuable text, as it offers a more critical approach to understanding the nature of identity politics and nationalism in the post-Cold War era. Composed of numerous short essays by a diverse array of scholars, the text challenges the primacy of the role of the territorial state in international relations. It brings to the reader's attention the notion that the concept of identity is less determinate than it is believed to be. This is especially so in light of the role of political refugees, migrant workers and other immigrants. *Challenging Boundaries* suggests that the concept of identity is susceptible to change, and that those states which have asserted/abused their power also have sought to privilege the identity that they prefer over the identities of those whom they have dominated. Moreover, this volume analyzes how various groups of individuals have been left without a sense of origin or worse yet, how the dominant powers have attempted to “erase” (Shapiro and Alker, 1996: 270) their sense of self. These essays help to reinforce my argument that many of the identity-based conflicts occurring in the Balkans and Baltics have represented the efforts of dominant leaders/elites attempting to assert the identity of those whom they represent over those whom they are trying to suppress.

The aforementioned texts as well as the critical studies texts that I rely upon in this project share at least one trait in common: the analysis of the role of *anarchy* and *sovereignty* in the international sphere. Numerous writings have struggled with the concept of anarchy, or the absence of a supreme authority above nation-states. Some have found it to be

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4 Logocentrism can be understood as the privileging of the word.
problematic whereas others at the same time found have it to be an indispensable concept. My contention is that statehood and anarchy mutually constitute each other. There is nothing natural or predetermined about the condition of anarchy. This also reveals the constructed, malleable nature of state sovereignty. By suggesting that sovereignty is not a concept existing in absolute it will be argued that conflicts arising out of identity crises are not untreatable simply because they might exist strictly within the confines of a sovereign state (Wendt, 1994: 388). One cannot adequately come to define the concept of sovereignty without being familiar with the conditions ascribed to anarchy, and vice versa.
CHAPTER 3
WHY CONSTRUCTIVISM?

As Onuf's work confirms, constructivism is not a monolithic body with one uniform philosophical approach. Scholars have attempted to categorize it, for example, on the basis of structuralist and post-structuralist constructivism. I am trying however, to avoid these strict labels which suggest that each category is mutually exclusive. Rather, my approach relies upon many elements of constructivism in an effort to adopt the role of the "bricoleur" (Onuf, 1989: 105). That is to say, I intend to utilize various aspects of constructivism as they are needed throughout this project. Hence, my plan is not based upon a strict, narrow conception of the utility of constructivist thought.

Constructivism tends to focus upon how a particular discourse contributes to theory and practice, for example, in international relations. On a basic level it accepts a reality that is socially constructed between agents—be they individuals, groups, etc. Nevertheless, this reality is not entirely fabricated through the complete consciousness of the actors involved (Campbell, 1998: 24-25). The more dominant theoretical approaches such as neorealism tend to emphasize the role of structure in determining actor expectations and behavior. This tends to rob individuals and groups of their agency, and it adds a strong element of determinism to social reality. Furthermore, it does not question the incentives/motives of those global "powers" contributing to the dominant discourse. Hence, the nature of social reality simply is treated as the one and only reality, without challenging the dominant paradigms—many which have further constricted the freedom of groups experiencing crises due to their identity or lack of identity. One alternative that I present holds that individual agents are more free to act than might be thought, but that their freedom is heavily constrained by the practices of elites.

The role of the absolute versus the relative also is fundamental to a constructivist challenge to the traditional approaches of IR. Of course, whenever the absolute/relative
binary is discussed scholars tend to express strong skepticism toward the idea of relativity at the conceptual level. They cast it off as dangerously nihilistic (Dillon, 1996: 129) and valueless. Such a conception is misconstrued. By arguing for the relativity of concepts such as anarchy, it is suggested that those concepts which have been so crucial to the discourse of IR have not existed as a grounding point outside of all difference. This is where the utility of deconstruction (Campbell, 1998: 20) appears. By showing the co-dependence of one concept upon another, we can try to avoid privileging one and marginalizing the other. More importantly, we can recognize the social world (as it is treated through concepts) as far more malleable and capable of change than the traditional approaches are willing to allow. In this respect the end result is a rejection of phenomena such as identity-based conflict and nationalism as natural, inevitable or continuous. Far too many scholars and policymakers lack the awareness that they have greater mobility in liberating themselves from the paradoxes and dead-end propositions set forth by the traditional texts.

One such binary in need of being “deconstructed” is that of self/other. Indeed, a number of critical theorists has sought to do this. Throughout this research the self/other binary will be considered at two levels. The first consists of the relationship between national leaders in the Balkans and Baltics, and those whom they seek to portray as the other—meaning those minorities whom they have persecuted. Examples include the Serb majority in the former Yugoslavia and the ethnic Albanian minority in Kosovo, and the majority of ethnic Latvians in Latvia and the ethnic Russian minority within that state. The second level refers to the regional and international forces that have created a self/other binary. Here, I refer primarily to the Western world and its attempt to “create” an other in relation to the inhabitants of Eastern Europe and the former USSR. But the role of Russia in relation to Latvia also must be explored. It will be crucial to examine the role of alterity (See Laean in Con Davis and

5 This is not to deny that members of persecuted minorities have responded by carrying out repressive acts upon their designated adversaries.
Schleifer), or “otherness” in relation to the formation of perceptions between sovereign entities.

By employing a constructivist approach to this topic we are left with the suggestion that national and regional leaders/elites have selected characteristics which are more *arbitrary* than natural with respect to their engagement in identity-based conflicts. In other words, there is nothing inevitable or predetermined about the choices that have been made in order for one group to differentiate itself from another. However, I do not seek to imply that identity is an irrelevant concept. Rather, there must be something very appealing about it that has prompted leaders/elites to choose it as a means of political mobilization. Although this project explores in greater detail the possible motives of such leaders/elites, I will suggest at this point that the qualities associated with identity, be they race, ethnicity, religion, language, customs, etc., have such a strong tendency to be readily adopted by groups that they can be used in order to (re)create identities. Because leaders can rely upon the historical dimensions of these variables they also can manipulate them out of historical context in order to mobilize their populations.

More broadly, a constructivist assessment asserts itself over the traditional theoretical approaches because it does not simply accept the existing state of international affairs as dictated by forces beyond the reach of agents. Instead, it seeks to analyze *how* events such as conflict have evolved, in the hope that if policymakers had a more critical understanding of phenomena they would be less likely to repeat the same mistakes to which the traditional approaches have led them. It seeks also to address the means by which social reality is constructed between agents (Ruggie, 1998: 863). As a side note, it is interesting to think of one approach not mentioned above—that of Marxism. If we were to read into a Marxian treatment of identity we would find that Marx’ thought suggests that identity would become less troublesome as classes and nation-states dissolve (Tucker, 1978: 488). Obviously this has yet to occur, and few can be certain that even if such dissolution could occur the
disappearance of nation-states would be desirable. Yet, it is interesting to conceive of how Marxian discourse offers an alternative understanding of identity—one based not on religion, race, etc., but rather upon status as a proletarian.
CHAPTER 4

APPLICATIONS OF THE CONSTRUCTIVIST APPROACH TO IDENTITY-BASED POLITICS

What then, is the special utility of my approach with respect to identity-based conflict in the post-Cold War era? Although I do not seek to provide a panacea for the ills of identity conflict and nationalism, I believe that much progress can be made away from the constraints of the dominant theoretical approaches. Common to these approaches is a highly problematic element made difficult by a narrow, pessimistic outlook. It relates to the concept of self-interest. Realism, neorealism and institutionalism tend to place limits upon the amount of mutual benefits to be gained in international relations because of the presumption that states are continuing to advance their own interests, even at the expense of others (Keohane and Martin, 1995: 42-44). These schools survive because they mislead representatives of states’ sovereignty into believing that self-interest is the foremost, if not the only, telos or end. My argument concerns itself with the notion that the preoccupation with state self-interest is much too excessive or at the least, misdirected. Because interests now are applying to identity-based groups which often transcend geographical borders, and because identities are not static but dynamic it will be increasingly difficult to define interests solely based upon the physical state. Of course policymakers and elites still overlook this idea, and hence promote the traditional tenets of IR. But the nation-state is a fusion of two concepts; nation and state. If the primacy of nation overshadows that of state, or vice versa, how severe will the political consequences be? State self-interest then, is overvalued or misperceived. Representatives of sovereignty grasp hold of this concept as a guiding principle, thereby bypassing any popular interests that might apply beyond the boundaries of the physical state.

Although the idea of the physical state and its interests cannot be cast off, states do have incentives to stray from “power politics”. The applications of the traditional conceptions of
international relations frequently create adverse circumstances for all actors involved in a particular conflict. For example, the U.S./NATO coalition, in choosing a bombing campaign in the former Yugoslavia in 1999 actually complicated prospects for regional stability. How is this so? One reason relates to the uneasiness about the future of Serbia and its fellow provinces after international forces leave Kosovo. By refusing to pursue a more critical understanding of the Balkan conflict, the U.S./West rejected diplomacy and further complicated an already tense situation. Although the current situation in Latvia is not as volatile, a similar analysis applies. Russia, by insisting upon greater rights and protection of ethnic Russians in Latvia, has contributed to a greater distancing between ethnic Latvians and ethnic Russians (Rudenshiold, 1992: 609). This has come frequently at the expense of ascribing pejorative qualities to the "other"—i.e. ethnic Latvians.

Another implication regarding the role of identity-based conflict, to be considered in greater depth later in this paper, is that international forces also are responsible for the burgeoning of regional conflicts. In efforts to cling to tautological principles based on self-interest, states from the Western world have contributed to a gross misrepresentation of the affairs in other states. To an extent this has been done in order to devise an adversary and perpetuate the need for an active foreign policy (Neumann, 1996: 23). By choosing to define Balkan conflict within the past decade as a function of natural, historical hatreds, the U.S./West have portrayed non-Western states in a disparaging light. Yet, as I will argue, it has been the work of certain regional elites/leaders in these troubled states who have served as the actual adversaries—not just of the West but in many cases of humanity. In the case of the Baltics, for example, Russia has sought to portray ethnic Latvians as an obstacle to the welfare of ethnic Russians. However, it has not proposed any political solutions which will accommodate all inhabitants of Latvia, be they ethnic Russians or ethnic Latvians. It is unlikely that there ever will be a foolproof vaccination against the outgrowth of international
misperceptions so as long as media elites, narrow-minded diplomats or abusive leaders continue pursuing their perverse agendas.

Finally, there is a need to uncover some possible factors leading to the choice of identity as a means of mobilization. Although I reject most identity-based conflicts to be the product of timeless, historical hatreds, I suspect that leaders/elites can rely upon historical information in order to generate new conflicts. In this regard, it is my contention that identity-based crises in post-Communist states are not continuations of older conflicts but rather conflicts based upon the belief that they are extensions of older feuds. This is an important difference. It suggests the strong degree to which identity-based conflicts have been constructed by leaders/elites seeking to promote themselves and those whom they claim to represent. Hybridization has allowed elites, in part, to construct the realities of their nation-states.

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6 Consider, for example the notion that the diplomat has changed from sovereign representative to more of a medium for conveying information between heads of state. See Luard, ed., Basic Texts in International
CHAPTER 5

THEORETICAL BASIS: IDENTITY AND NATIONALISM

Understanding the crux of my argument entails a fairly close look at the concepts of identity and nationalism. Identity is a concept which, in large part, allows one body of individuals to distinguish itself from another on the basis of attributes that, as history has demonstrated, are heavily arbitrary. In other words, there is nothing absolute or natural about using religion, ethnicity or even language to explain what identity is. In the context of the post-communist world ethnicity has been a strong determinant of identity. But, as I would argue, it mistakenly has been confused as a *synonym* for identity. This has allowed regional elites to mobilize members of their respective ethnicities in order to create a drive toward survival in the absence of the totalitarian order.

Nevertheless, it is imperative to dissect the concepts of ethnicity and ethnic conflict. As Walker claims, doing so requires us to "demolish the notion that 'ethnic conflict' represents a unique phenomenon or that [post-communist conflicts] are best understood in terms of the unchanging ethnic identities of the participants" (Walker in Drobizheva, 1996: 3). Rather, ethnicity and identity frequently are linked together when a particular body of political elites wishes to accomplish a particular objective. Since social and/or political objectives change with time and historical context, elites often have used different criteria to impose a specific identity upon various groups of people. This forces us to rethink the concept of identity; it casts doubt upon the idea that ethnicity and identity are historically fixed and so rigid that they always resurface and reintroduce old conflicts. Interests change, as do identities. One should never overlook the primacy of historical context.

As a side note, but nonetheless an important one, historical context can be a difficult concept with which to deal. This results from the broadness of the conditions to which it might refer. It is not my intention simply to characterize every volatile event as the product of...
of historical context, or to be reductionistic with respect to this concept. However, the importance of historical context still remains crucial to the constructivist approach put forward in this writing. This is one area in which the traditional approaches appear to be deficient. They tend to assert a paradigm of predicting events in international affairs, yet they ignore the changing dynamics of historical context. This is not, of course, to claim that historical context always changes over night. Rather, it can take anywhere from over night to over decades or even longer. But given the uncertainty of knowing what conditions will arise between and within states, it is difficult to understand how approaches such as that of the neorealists (for example) can boast of having such tremendous predictive power. For this reason, the constructivist approach offers a more prudent examination of international affairs without relying upon generalizations about the actions/behavior of states or groups of states.

As David Campbell suggests, understanding (for example) the nature of the formation of identity polities rests upon tracing how identity and the events it influences are constructed (Campbell, 1998: 4). (In fact, this is not an entirely original claim, for the constructivist school of thought tends to endorse the utility of “how” over “why” in large part.) Seeking to understand how concepts and events are constructed avoids the fixation of searching for set, definitive causes which deceivingly appear to ground meaning in absolute. This is part of the task of deconstruction—an event that exposes those relationships of supplementarity which help to define our concepts (1998: 4-6). And where the Balkan crisis is concerned some of the most important concepts to consider are “ethnicity, nationalism, identity, violence” (1998: 23). For if scholars adhere to the traditional acceptance of these concepts as fixed and absolute, there will be no space allowed in which to consider them constructs and hence not the result of an unchangeable, natural order. The alternative presents us with the possibility of challenging the assumed usage of concepts such as identity, upon which so much of current conflicts rest.
How has identity been deconstructed in order to reveal the process by which it has acquired meaning? In essence, the creation of identity has been exposed through the conception of the self/other binary. Yet, as Neuman warns, there is nothing natural about the self (Neuman, 1996: 2). Identity is tremendously based in difference, but difference is based upon an arbitrary set of characteristics or qualities such as ethnicity and religion. When treating the matter of Balkan conflict it will be imperative to consider how ethnic Albanian Muslims in relation to Orthodox Christian Serbs have been depicted as the “other” by elite Serbian political leaders, a performative act which can spread into the minds of the Serbian masses and then be adopted as an ascendant view. Conversely, it can be understood that oppressed Kosovars would adopt a similar view of Christian Serbs as the “other”. In this regard both groups would appear to celebrate their own difference but resent that of their opposites. However, both parties would come to ignore or overlook a means by which they could be thought to have a similar identity—that of citizens of the same state or federation (and more specifically, until the beginning of this decade, Yugoslavs).

With respect to the self/other binary and identity formation, it is crucial to acknowledge identity not as having meaning on its own but rather by depending upon those who serve as the “other”. This implies that the underpinnings of identity rely upon concepts which are mutually constitutive (Campbell, 1998: 23). In relation to the subject of the Kosovo crisis, then, one can see that Christian Serbs and ethnic Albanian Muslims depend upon each other to define who they are. This denies each ethnicity superiority over the other and rejects the claim that by virtue of who these people are their differences naturally are irreconcilable and hence must lead to bitter feuds. Similarly, ethnic Latvians acquire their identity vis-a-vis the presence of ethnic Russians within and outside of Latvia, and vice versa.

However, in spite of the visibility of these ideas at the conceptual level, the process of identity formation does not always allow those whose identity is being formed to realize
how they gain their identity. The end result often times tends to be an inclination toward referencing the “others” as “strangers” (Neuman, 1996: 11). Furthermore, the implications of this event can be dangerous if the other is deemed a culprit, or more explicitly, an enemy. From a more external perspective, meaning that of the U.S. and NATO countries, it should be taken into consideration that, regretfully, “foreign policy is generally about making an other” (1996: 23). If this is so, perhaps scholars and policymakers need to be made aware of the dangers behind estranging themselves from the Serbs and their governmental leaders—an action which potentially could hinder any Western-based peace initiatives.

Nationalism also has played a role in relation to identity politics in the post-Cold War world. In the Balkans, for example, it has been intertwined with the Serbian “national myth” (Denitch, 1994: 117). For the sake of this analysis nationalism is to be taken as a political construct. It does not by necessity represent the sentiment that a group of people, through race or ethnicity, is synonymous with a particular geographical entity and therefore entitled to defend it at all costs. A more careful look reveals that nationalism largely is the product of past political events or issues revived for “contemporary political goals” (Campbell, 1998: 86). If this is so, then nationalism must be realized not as a phenomenon which represents in absolute the claims of one group of people over those of another. In the case of the former Yugoslavia I treat the matter of nationalism as a concept relied upon by Serbian political/governmental elites to rally their “own” against the Kosovars. More will be mentioned about this when discussing how domestic actors have shaped identity politics and fueled recent conflicts.

Concerning sovereignty, it too is better understood as a social construct. This challenges older assumptions which look toward some transcendental element of sovereignty to characterize it as unchangeable. However, as Biersteker and Weber explain, sovereignty is socially constructed as it is created via “mutual recognition” (Biersteker and Weber, 1996: 2-3) between nation-states. The crux of the sovereignty issue resides in the question of
whether it exists in relation to a particular group of people, the territorial space which they inhabit (1996: 2), or something entirely different. When relating this to the topic of Balkan conflict, analyzing sovereignty is important in questioning whether it belongs to the Serbs as a people, the Serbs and the Kosovars (and all provincial peoples of the former Yugoslavia) by virtue of a shared territory, or to some other political entity.

Understanding how identity and nationalism have been fabricated in the post-communist world entails acknowledging that the presence of multiple groups of different identities in a given state does not mean that mutual intolerance naturally will occur. Diverse groups have coexisted and still do in various regions of the world despite differences in religion, ethnicity, language, culture, etc. Beginning to understand how identity and nationalism have been made problematic does not always demand that we search far back across the centuries to observe how these concepts have become salient. Rather, one need not go further back than the era of the Soviet Union itself to study how identity politics has been catalyzed in such a way that it breeds nationalistic calls. Explosions of ethnic conflict have been erroneously portrayed. Distinct bodies of people have lived amongst one another in the post-Communist world, many mixed together like two different chemical compounds refusing to explode or react. One catalyst to consider is that of ethnofederalism within the Soviet Union, to which I will first give my attention. The next example of the nature of identity politics will be illustrated through the case of Latvia with respect to ethnofederalism.
CHAPTER 6

SOVIET ETHNOFEDERALISM

As a tool for the "...politicization of ethnicity" (Roeder, 1991: 197), this practice ultimately arranged for tensions to occur within those republics designated to be different by virtue of ethnicity. Essentially, ethnofederalism was a means by which Soviet political elites sought to organize their regime by preventing the pursuit of industrial growth from being hindered by potential inter-group rivalries. Members of the numerous Soviet states would indeed be represented at the national level. However, there was a catch to this. Groups of different ethnicities across the various states would receive representation, but this would occur through officially-appointed leaders who were strictly forbidden from practicing a form of politics that would be sensitive to the will of those whom they represented (1991: 203). From a speculative standpoint, Russia's actions have represented a desire to regain its power, prestige and imperialistic-like authority.

With ethnofederalism, it can be seen that the inadequate representation of the interests of different ethnic groups prevented individuals within these groups from developing agendas that conflicted with Soviet ideology. Simultaneously, the leaders who did represent their respective regions were transformed from ethnic representatives to elite party members\(^7\) whose objectives no longer aimed at addressing the particularities of states with diverse bodies of individuals. In turn, these officials institutionalized ethnicity in the political sphere, making way for what eventually would become ethnic rivalries. In order for particular groups to vie for their interests, they were obliged to defer to their elite party members who were in large part responsible for allocating resources. Although this worked well for some ethnic groups it constrained minority groups from pursuing objectives in the

\(^7\) Although, other national elites, who were not appointed by the communist party, continued to coexist with those who became elites by the authority of the party.
same fashion (Roeder, 1991: 206). This further heightened the potential for conflict with the impending dissolution of the Soviet Union.

Because national political elites were seen to be the authorities capable of providing ethnic and identity-based groups with resources, Soviet states increasingly fell victim to groups who associated nationalism with survival. How is this so, if the intent of ethnofederalism was to prevent inter-group conflicts? Essentially, the Soviet system of ethnofederalism provided no means by which sub-national or even international groups could interact with each other politically so as to bargain or negotiate for their objectives. Instead, identity-based groups became dependent upon looking upward to communist elites (Batt and Wolczuk, 1998: 94). Hence the Soviet system, consciously or unconsciously, encouraged action through calls for nationalism as opposed to interethnic negotiations or agreements. In some instances, the Soviet system fabricated even greater ethnically-based conflicts by leading sub-national groups to believe that they constituted and were deserving of their own nation-state: “the communist federal system had even created nations out of ethnic groups which had previously been unaware of, or uncertain as to their political identity” (1998: 94-95).

How then, did Soviet ethnofederalism provide for the conditions which with the fall of communism triggered ethnic rivalries and calls for nationalism? One such means concerns the former communist leaders themselves. With the creation of independent, sovereign republics communist leaders who were once loyal to the Soviet communist party were forced to look elsewhere for support. By appealing to the nationalistic calls of those whom they represented, these officials reinforced the perception that ethnic assertions and reliance upon nationalism were justifiable means for engaging in politics. During the era of the Soviet Union such leaders were far less accountable to those whom they (supposedly) represented. With the creation of independent republics, however, they were required to find some means of acquiring support. Introducing a nationalistic ideology was a strong
mechanism for rallying the confidence of those groups whom they sought to represent. In many cases this included an association with more extreme nationalist groups whose beliefs encompassed racist attitudes tied with ethnic pride (Batt and Woleczuk, 1998: 95).

Moreover, there is evidence that in a multitude of former Soviet republics national elites were acquiring more power prior to the fall of communism. As this occurred, they continued to mobilize the groups that they represented in order to compete for important resources from the central communist party. Increasingly, minority groups failed to obtain adequate representation and often suffered from insufficient resource allocation (e.g. Jews) (Roeder, 1991: 206). Furthermore, the mobilization of different ethnic groups transformed many of these collectivities into “interest” (Glazer and Moynihan quoted in Roeder, 1991: 203) groups, again suggesting that the notion of identity is malleable and subject to manipulation.

In retrospect, Soviet ethnofederalism served as a highly divisive means of organizing different identity-based groups. Although it seemingly prevented volatile conflicts throughout most of the existence of the Soviet Union, ultimately it contributed to the fall of the USSR. But upon dissolution of the communist order, the legacy of Soviet ethnofederalism established a situation whereby a number of republics faced challenges created by the political structure of the totalitarian order (although it must be realized that not all former Soviet republics have suffered from heated ethnic conflicts).
CHAPTER 7

ETHNIC CONFLICT IN LATVIA

With respect to the role of identity-based conflict and nationalism in Latvia, there exists a mixed record of results. However, this record suggests once again that the behavior of the Soviet Union greatly influenced how ethnic conflict was/has been constructed in its former republics. And again, it is necessary to reiterate the argument that I am advancing: namely, that identity-based conflicts in the regions I am studying usually have been shaped by political and economic elites, especially when material or security interests have been at stake. But as the case of Latvia also suggests, ethnic conflicts and drives for nationalism are anything but the product of natural, irremediable forces and causal factors. As Rudenshiold claims, “independence in the Baltics has been no panacea,” but rather a potential ethnic problem based on a “...strong Soviet legacy” (Rudenshiold, 1992: 609). Again, this reinforces the notion that ethnic conflicts in the post-communist world are not by any means natural, but rather the product of decisions made during the reign of totalitarianism. (Although, I disagree with Rudenshiold’s description of ethnic conflict as having been rejuvenated. Perhaps a better term would be “constituted” or “reconstituted”.)

Latvia currently consists of a roughly fifty-fifty split between ethnic Latvians and non-indigenous individuals, with a recent increase in ethnic Russians (Rudenshiold, 1992: 613-614). During the era of the Cold War the Soviet Union sought to establish industries in its various regions, a maneuver which spawned an increase in Russian migration to the area. This approach was followed by a general Soviet unwillingness to encourage ethnic integration among the population. Instead, many closely-knit Russian collectivities formed in Latvia. To date, enormous complexities have arisen as a result of this arrangement. For example, legislation at the national level has been infused with efforts to promote objectives strictly coinciding with the interests of ethnic Russians. However, ethnic Latvians have of course responded with countermeasures of their own, such as efforts to make their language
the official national language. This in turn has prompted Russian reactions, creating a vicious cycle of activity (1992: 609).

Who or what then has been responsible for this precarious situation in Latvia, especially since the fall of the Soviet Union? A simplistic analysis, which assumes ethnic rivalries and calls for nationalism to be rooted in unending histories does not account for such a case. Once again, we must focus on those elites/communist party members who were heavily responsible for constructing the present situation in Latvia. Upon creating the conditions that allowed Russians to migrate into Latvia the communist party refused to encourage full integration, thus projecting the images of ethnicity and identity to be rigid and incapable of change. But it is quite evident that in the matter of Russia and Latvia their peoples have not shared a deeply-rooted, ancient historical conflict which translates into inevitable, unchanging disputes.

In terms of manipulating one population against or in opposition to another, the case of Russia and the Baltics calls to mind what I refer to as “passive mobilization”. In the era of Stalin, one finds a tremendous amount of propaganda made by the Soviet leader with the intent of embellishing Russian characteristics over those belonging to inhabitants of the satellite states. On various occasions Stalin tried to assert the superiority of Russian qualities throughout the USSR. This placed a heavy strain upon members of the Baltic states, who were trying to protect and maintain their own cultural practices (Vizulis, 1985: 94). Hence, by “passive mobilization” I mean that the Russian population learned to differentiate itself from the other through indoctrination sponsored by a minority of cultural and political elites. As attitudes of superiority evolve over the years it becomes easier to understand how Russians in the present might support nationalist rhetoric which presents others as inferior. Yet, how many of them understand the intense struggles underwent by members of the Baltic states (such as Latvia) in order to retain their cultural characteristics in the face of threats generated by a nation with imperialistic ambitions? Passive mobilization, then,
reduces to the idea that members of the population do not necessarily have to engage arduously in nationalist activity to acquire a pro-nationalist outlook or support for nationalist policies.

A further effect of the Russian perspective on Latvia and the Baltics has been the historical creation of the classification “[sovereign] state or Russian colony” (Vizulis, 1985: 95). Given that scholars have readily acknowledged the categorizing of Latvia as one of these two entities, it is noteworthy that the actions of political elites during the era of the Soviet Union and now in the Russian Federation have attempted to de-legitimize the integrity of Baltic states. But this is largely what my writing has been about; namely, the construction of political identity as a concept which depends upon another concept for meaning. Latvians are not inherently “colonists”. Rather, the decisions of political, cultural and economic elites in Russia have contributed to the confusion behind recognizing Latvian identity. A more critical understanding of the dynamics of identity in Latvia requires one to consider the motives of leaders in Russia and how leaders in Latvia have responded. The usage of mutually exclusive categories such as colony/sovereign state invites itself to be deconstructed.

The Latvian case also is a strong reminder of the attention given to the concept of the diaspora in the post-Cold War world. Given the dissolution of the Soviet Union, the creation of successor states throughout the region has bolstered scholarly examinations of bodies of people with shared origins who are living away from the homeland. This might lead individuals to accept that the existence of diasporas will likely create volatile situations throughout the former communist states. But is this always the case? Does the presence of one body of individuals with a common heritage, living outside of its homeland, necessitate that the home state actively will try to advance the interests of its people?

Consider this statement from Charles King and Neil J. Melvin: “Politics, not identity, has been the major determinant of when and how successfully foreign policy has
reflected existing ethnic linkages” (King and Melvin, 1999: 118). Their research suggests that issue-areas based on factors such as identity do not inevitably yield active measures taken by the homeland. Rather, a more specific political motive has to exist in order for one state to become seriously involved in monitoring the welfare of its “own” living in the abroad. Economic incentive might account for part of this motive. If Russia believes that its migrants to Latvia can fare well abroad and not pose a direct burden to the suffering Russian economy, it might encourage the advancement of the interests of ethnic Russians in Latvia.8 Or if Russia itself believes that ethnic Russians can contribute to better prospects for foreign investment in Latvia, it might be inclined to protect the interests of its population living abroad. Still another factor compelling Russia to scrutinize the conditions of Russians in Latvia simply might relate to its ambitions to revive old imperialistic pursuits (See Rudenshiold). And yet, ironically, not even Russia has in its possession a consensus as to what its more ambitious goals are. One, for example, includes the idea that it wishes to become more similar to Western Europe. As Neumann warns, though, the Russian conception of Europe is highly subjective and to a large extent has been created by Russians themselves (Neumann, 1996: 2). But with the specter of Soviet imperialism still alive amongst certain politicians and opportunists in Russia, it is not surprising that there is such great concern for the affairs of ethnic Russians living in states which used to form parts of the USSR.

This last statement is not especially difficult to accept, in light of the legacy of Soviet communism. Consider this passage by King and Melvin:

The Soviet Union, although supposedly based on the withering away of ethnic allegiances, privileged ethnicity as a source of individual identity and a focus of group solidarity... Both individuals (through ethnic designations on internal passports) and entire populations (through the administrative structure of the state) were defined by their ethnic provenance—a form of identity that was itself in many

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8 Although this is somewhat speculative, it is meant to suggest that there are other alternatives to understanding the nature of identity-based disputes.
cases consciously constructed by Soviet ethnographers, linguists, and historians in the early years after the Bolshevik Revolution. (King and Melvin, 1999: 117)

Again, the dynamics of ethnofederalism are revealed. More importantly, this passage demonstrates some of the means by which identity was constructed by past Soviet regimes. Of course, it is not likely that such regimes gave equal attention to ethnic Russians living within the various Soviet territories. As the current situation in Latvia implies, identity is more intensely politicized when a state such as Russia is trying to exercise particular interests between itself and another state. The measures taken by individuals such as ethnographers and linguists during the Soviet era confirm the degree of effort behind attempts to fulfill imperialistic drives and ambitions. However if it is not in a state’s interest, as represented by a certain elite body, to act on behalf of its ethnic population living abroad, intervention will not necessarily occur (1999: 116). This suggests that identity-based disputes/conflicts do not arise by virtue of natural forces or inevitable sequences of events.

Successor states such as Latvia also serve as entities helping to reinforce the Russian post-Soviet identity. With the presence of ethnic Russians living abroad, the homeland can boast of being a regional power with deep trans-border ethnic ties (King and Melvin, 1999: 120). Although this does not necessarily hint at Russian ambitions to restore an imperialistic state, it suggests a drive toward establishing a culturally dominant Russia elevated above the new post-communist countries. In this respect, diaspora politics have been an elitist “invention” (1999: 120) used to provide direction to Russian regimes in light of post-Cold War uncertainties. Hence, one finds a partial explanation for maneuvers taken by figures such as former President Yeltsin on behalf of Russian populations living outside of the Russian Federation. In sum, it is striking to note, as King and Melvin have done, that homeland interventions for the sake of an ethnic minority do not necessarily occur unless a particular political motive arises. Conversely, attachment toward the homeland does not
necessarily arise without a particular political or economic motive; not simply some obscure sense of loyalty toward the physical state of origin.

Before proceeding, my discussion of elites must be extended and further explained. Thus far I have used the term to refer to a minority of individuals, usually of great material wealth, whose interests reside in perpetuating their own status within the confines of their own state or across borders. Speaking in contemporary terms, elites consists of individuals such as legislators (at all, but especially the national level), governmental executives, judiciary figures and other governmentally elected/appointed officials. However, elites do not necessarily have to be directly involved with government on any level in order to retain their status. A number of elites such as individuals of the business class or intelligentsia also exercises its interests by virtue of its relative power either as a voting bloc or through individual lobbying efforts. But elites also could consist of prominent celebrities or figureheads of popular culture. If we were to assess the nature of elites in the more distant past we would find that they consisted of members of the nobility, wherever a noble class still existed. In the case of Latvia a number of nobles under the Russian regime of Kerensky, earlier in the 20th century, acted to complicate the prospects for creating a lasting, sovereign Latvian state (Kaslas, 1976: 50). Interestingly, while the “...Russian intellectual class sympathized with the Latvian people, the local nobility suppressed [them] with so much violence” (1976: 48).

A presence of multiple identity-based groups in states such as those of the Baltics also yields mindfulness toward the concept of national “fitness” (Clemens, Jr. in Szporluk, 1994: 185). This term refers to a group’s ability to maintain its cultural practices, features and customs—essentially, its shared memories and lifestyles (1994: 185). Scholars have been quick to measure the level of fitness for indigenous groups in states such as Latvia. Some have found that despite threats from the Russian homeland Latvia has maintained its sense of national fitness. The other side of this matter, however, is applicable to ethnic
Russians in Latvia. With the creation of a sovereign Latvian state what are the dynamics of ethnic Russians’ sense of fitness?

What this suggests is that the awareness of concepts such as national fitness actually can contribute to divisiveness between different identity-based groups. Again, the attempt here is not to be culturally insensitive but to strive toward an understanding of the state which can encompass multiple ethnicities, etc. When we examine the case of the Baltic states we find that concerns over reconciling the existence of multiple identity-based groups have been motivated by the political changes of the post-Cold War world. In a sense, one could rely upon Biblical analogies to address these changes: similar to the awareness brought to Adam and Eve of being unclothed in the Garden of Eden after partaking of the forbidden fruit, ethnic Russians in Latvia have been made aware of their precarious position without the protection of the Soviet regime. However, this awareness is largely a construction influenced by elite Russian figures who have attempted to politicize the role of ethnicity in light of the dissolution of the USSR. My point here is that the highly politicized nature of post-communist affairs has endangered the prospects for intrastate compatibility between members of different ethnic groups in states such as Latvia. As a result, drives toward ethnic Russian citizenship (Clemens, Jr. in Szporluk, 1994: 196) in Baltic states have become complex, dense issue-areas furthering regional tensions and misunderstandings.

Far from having solved its ethnic and nationalistic dilemmas, Latvia, however, has experienced some promising trends with respect to the coexistence of Russians and Latvians. For example, the better employment opportunities presented to migrating Russians have provided them with fewer reasons to feel antagonistic toward ethnic Latvians with whom they might have to interact. There also is some evidence indicating that Latvian political figures have sought to promote more peaceful efforts in contending with issues created by the presence of ethnic Russians (Clemens, Jr. in Szporluk, 1994: 196). This has been especially true with the granting of independence to Latvia, given its convictions about how
It was illegitimately annexed to the Soviet Union before the Cold War (Kaslas, 1976: 613-614). Hence, although Latvia is far from having solved its identity-based problems, the fact that the end of Soviet Union initially prompted some feelings of relief for Latvia demonstrates the profound effect it had on constructing ethnic conflicts and calls for nationalism. This adds another dimension to the phenomenon of ethnic conflict in the post-communist world.

Now, however, the Soviet legacy continues to plague “transition” states such as Latvia because despite the demise of the Soviet Union its former central state (i.e. Russia) refuses to alleviate the tensions caused by issues of ethnicity and nationalism. For example, although Latvia is no longer tied to a central authority its population of ethnic Russians relentlessly draws attention from Russia itself. In 1992 the Russian government under Boris Yeltsin made appeals against Latvia in order to protect ethnic Russians from what it perceived as laws discriminating against them (Drobizheva, 1996: 140).

Might the Russian government have a plausible case? Quite possibly. However, the point here is that actions taken during the Soviet era have continued to complicate ethnic relations throughout post-communist states. These actions also have contributed to a narrow conception of ethnic conflict as something concrete and absolute which must be treated as if it were incapable of being assuaged. Moreover, evidence exists which suggests how national leaders such as Yeltsin himself have appealed to stereotypical representations of non-Russians in order to mobilize public sentiments against former communist states such as Latvia. And by no means have these efforts been limited to attitudes toward the Baltics (Drobizheva, 1996: 140). They imply that current political elites have sought to mobilize their populations in a period of economic, political and social instability—that is, the post-Cold War era.

The foregoing discussion of ethnofederalism in the Soviet Union and more specifically, in Latvia, reveals how the politics of identity and nationalism do not represent
forces grounded with the beginning of time or the modern world. Rather, they often are politically constructed by economic and political elites—a minority of individuals seeking to promote particular interests. As I would argue, very rarely have identity-based groups had the opportunity to think critically about their own histories. But would the previous discussion also apply to “transition” states that are more notorious for the presence of bitter ethnic conflict, such as those of the Balkans? With this question in mind I turn now to an analysis of the Yugoslav situation since the end of the communist order.
CHAPTER 8

ETHNIC CONFLICT AND NATIONALISM: THE FORMER YUGOSLAVIA

On the surface it can be seen how students, scholars and policymakers would be intimidated when given a chance to analyze the problems of ethnic conflict and belligerence in the Balkans—especially with regard to the former Yugoslavia. A number of historians, in an effort to describe the dynamics of ethnic conflict in the Balkans, have presented current identity-based crises as the product of mutual hatreds dating back to the 13th century. The Medieval Serbian Empire, for example, has been cited as an epoch contributing to the notion that the Balkans will be forever tainted by endless ethnic strife. Moreover, historians have referred to dated conflicts between Muslims and Christians as a source of the problems which have revealed themselves since the end of the Cold War (Samar'y, 1995: 36). In the introduction to his edited volume, Larrabee narrowly assumes that the conclusion of the Cold War has “unleashed long-submerged historical antagonisms” (Larrabee, 1994: xii) in the Balkans. This statement constrains the potential for an innovative outlook on affairs in the region. Hence the title of his volume, The Volatile Powder Keg, analogizes Balkan ethnic/identity-based conflict as the product of “chemical” instability, if you will.

How accurate is this interpretation, however? A more critical analysis reveals that during the life of the Medieval Serbian Empire, Christians and Muslims were quite capable of coexisting without demonstrating the hostilities which have consumed the Balkans during the 1990's. As Samary suggests, the Serbian Empire actually experienced a tremendous amount of success while possessing a vast amount of diversity. If anything, the onset of the modern nation-state and the identities constructed by it leads us toward a better understanding of the historical origins of ethnic conflict in the Balkans (Samary, 36: 1995). However, it also leads us away from acceptance of the belief that by virtue of being Christian/Serb or Albanian/Muslim (for example), ethnic conflicts and drives toward
nationalism occur as naturally as do the elements. But there is no “Periodic Table” of ethnic hostilities.

Banac, for example, makes an assumption contrary to the approach taken in this writing with regard to identity-based conflict. He infuses the role of ideology and competing nationalist groups, but he de-emphasizes the special role played by regional and national elites. Although I am sympathetic to his efforts to locate more political accountability at the level of the masses, I understand Banac to neglect those forces which have manipulated the masses on the basis of phenomena such as nationalism/nationality. In one sense, he convolutes the process by which ethnic and identity-based conflicts develop. Far too rigid an element of causality is injected, producing a model such as the following: the presence of different identity groups in a specific area yields political incompatibility, which yields conflict, which yields efforts by elites to cope with such conflict (Banac, 1984: 12).

By focusing upon a brief but important period of history in Yugoslavia (1918-1921), Banac’s effort could be deemed an attempt to piece together or reconstruct the origins of nationalist tendencies in the present (Banac, 1984: 12). Nevertheless, two problems arise with this attempt. First, Banac toys with the idea of locating present-day feuds in a complex historical record (though not an ancient one). Moreover, he introduces a heavily linear component to understanding how identity-based tensions have arisen more recently.

Certainly, it would be implausible to assume blindly that Balkan conflict within recent years stems from a clean progression of events set into motion in 1918. Historical regression and progression do occur, contributing to the means by which identity-based conflict is fabricated. Finally, Banac removes much political accountability from the “special interests” (Banac, 1984: 29) of elites seeking to assert their position at the national or sub-national level. For the sake of keeping my argument consistent, I maintain that in order to secure their position elites do in fact require the attention of the masses. However, this “need” often represents the need to manipulate them in order to promote perverse interests.
Essentially, what authors such as Banac and Larrabee are doing is providing a more descriptive account of ethnic conflict in the Balkans. Yet, their intentions include explanation as well. In their efforts to achieve this they inadvertently have favored the element of description. How is this so? Explanation usually entails some means of accounting for phenomena or trying to justify how/why it has or does occur. It is here where a number of authors has demonstrated deficiency in accounting for the “how” aspect of analyzing phenomena. Both Banac and Larrabee, for example, cite nationalist and ethnic conflict as forces driving other events such as war or choices by national leaders to execute bellicose policies. But they do not succeed in explaining how national elites manipulate phenomena such as ethnic conflict. Therefore, listing off events such as ethnic conflict or nationalism describes the byproducts of political activity but does not account for the process by which events are influenced. To put this another way, it is inadequate to claim that ethnic conflict and nationalism drive Balkan instability, because in actuality they are phenomena resulting from leaders whose decisions stand to generate instability.

With this in mind, a good starting point might consist of asking how the existence and eventual fall of the communist order contributed to recent tensions in the Balkans. A useful reference is that provided by Crawford and Lipschutz, who argue that “exclusive and oppositional identities are politically constructed during periods of upheaval by certain members of political and economic elites” (Crawford and Lipschutz, 1997: 168). In the context of the former Yugoslavia, ethnic and identity-based conflicts are not necessarily the result of different ethnic groups consciously choosing to live in separate territorial spaces. After the Second World War, for example, Marshal Tito established a number of provinces based upon different ethnic groups. This maneuver, however, was to a large extent a political choice made in order to augment support for his political party. Any of the new provinces delegating allegiance to Tito would in turn receive greater financial assistance. As time progressed throughout the Cold War, income disparities within the provinces
influenced the onset of inter-ethnic competition for the sake of scarce resources (1997: 170-171). Hence, Tito and his regime fabricated a political tool out of ethnicity and identity.

By establishing different ethnic territories in Yugoslavia Tito did not act upon a natural inclination toward what was necessarily most practical. Rather, his actions reveal the creation of different provinces on the basis of ethnicity to be more of an arbitrary decision. By "arbitrary" it is meant that Tito could have relied upon other characteristics or elements to construct his provinces. Neither ethnicity nor political identity necessarily are the most appropriate means of revising political territories. Furthermore, until the latter portion of the Cold War Yugoslavia did not suffer from the same degree of ethnic conflict now taking place in the Balkans (Crawford and Lipschutz, 1997: 170). Once again, although the communist order seemingly provided for general stability amongst members of different ethnic groups, it can be seen how decisions made in its time also have contributed to present-day conflicts. Still, the understanding of how ethnic conflict and nationalist drives have been fueled in the Balkans is incomplete. Thus far I have attempted to demonstrate how current ethnic conflicts do not necessarily follow a perfect linear progression of historical hatreds and disputes. But it is also necessary to examine how contemporary regional political elites have contributed to ethnic disputes currently plaguing the Balkans.

One argument maintains that, in light of the end of the Cold War, political elites such as those of Serbia (i.e. Milosevic and his ruling faction) have initiated conflicts with the "other" in order to advance their political position and the resources of their respective provinces. As institutional strength in states such as Serbia has diminished, political leaders have sought to bolster their power and treat their economic hardships by seeking access to much-needed resources. This has revealed itself in practices such as ethnic cleansing—especially given the resource-rich regions of Yugoslavia such as those in northern Kosovo. Because of the means by which Serb provinces have been constructed, over-ambitious leaders such as Milosevic have used the concept of identity to mobilize their citizens against
those who are unlike them, such as ethnic Albanian Muslims (Crawford and Lipschutz, 1997: 176).

Hence, in the case of the Balkans it can be seen that ethnic conflict does not become ethnic conflict until regional elites decide for it to become prevalent. Consider, for example, professionals in Bosnia who at the start of the Bosnian war earlier this decade pleaded with Western scholars for them not to characterize the conflict as a purely ethnic one. Many made reference to mutual, inter-ethnic coalitions which were at war with “‘those outsiders, those thugs in the hills’” (Woodward in Drobizheva, 1996: 17). In this manner it can be seen that even when elites decide how to define the nature of a certain conflict, it is not to be assumed that such a definition will be universally accepted. This is why it is important to acknowledge the various bodies of individuals involved in a particular conflict. There is of course, the political regime and its leaders. Then there are the military forces. But there also is a society comprised of professionals, workers, etc. who do not equally accept the basis upon which engagement in a conflict is justified. Unfortunately, those who are most impressionable and least inclined to challenge their elite leaders will be, often times, more susceptible to accepting the justification behind a certain conflict. And yet in many cases even the most easily influenced groups such as peasants forced to remain loyal to their elites are capable of recognizing the contradictions in policy choices when identity-based conflicts are used to justify war. During the bombing of Serbia in 1999, a report was publicized in which members of a Serb family stated that they would have to adopt a militant spirit toward Kosovar Albanians living along their border—the same Kosovars with whom they once lived, worked and shared similar social interests (CNN/Headline News 25 April 1999). My point here is that adopting a certain attitude seems more to be a function of the fears instilled by political leaders such as Milosevic. In other words, it is difficult to defy the stances of one's political leaders, especially in times of conflict which are not even completely understood by all.
Even in the absence of immediate conflict, political elites such as Milosevic and the members of his ruling party are capable of stirring up popular sentiments against members whose identity they designate to be different. Just prior to the fall of communism, evidence supports the notion that Milosevic himself made efforts to further estrange his “people” from Albanian Muslims. This was done by his exaggeration of the differences between those adhering to the Muslim and Christian faiths. In this manner, he was capable of embellishing the Serb Orthodox Church for the purpose of energizing Serb nationalism (Crawford and Lipschutz, 1997: 177). For Milosevic, this allowed him to legitimize his later convictions against members of different ethnic groups, as has been revealed most recently in Kosovo. But taken by itself, religious difference is rarely a necessary or sufficient condition for the onset of regional hostilities. Some force usually is responsible for mobilizing the masses through the use of a political instrument, such as religion.

Interestingly, Susan L. Woodward asks why post-communist states tend to have their conflicts framed in terms of ethnicity and nationalism, as opposed to economic perils (Woodward in Drobizheva, 1996: 28). As I would argue, one response is that ethnicity and nationalism appear to be more salient because everyone is at some level compelled to accept/reject or search for a particular identity. This encourages political elites to rely upon ethnicity and nationalism because they seem to elicit more passionate responses from the masses. Obviously, relying upon economic strife is a great mobilizing mechanism. But since most of the post-communist states suffer from economic woes, it does not allow regional elites to find a means of distinguishing their problems from the problems of other states. In other words, it becomes difficult for elites to justify why their nation deserves access to particular resources if the bordering nation is just as needy. Therefore, identity politics becomes a vibrant means of rallying public support despite its superficiality and the many falsities behind contemporary depictions of identity.
In the matter of the Balkans I have tried to argue that present-day ethnic and nationalist-based conflicts do not necessarily represent the product of hundreds of years of relentless disputes among different groups. Although we must be sensitive to mutual cultural differences, it is difficult to accept that the unending belligerence in the Balkans of this decade has been a function of ethnic hatreds originating during the Medieval Serb Empire or during the Ottoman Empire. Rather, the communist and post-communist world have provided the conditions upon which elites have abused their positions in order to secure political authority while pursuing resources and national survival. Thus far I have argued from a standpoint that tends to confine the influences of identity and nationalist-based conflicts to the actions of elites in areas in which these conflicts have occurred. But are there other influences acting upon the surge in ethnic conflicts and nationalistic calls? The following section attempts to explain how the international community also has contributed to a less-than-critical understanding of the nature of identity politics and nationalism.
CHAPTER 9
INTERNATIONAL INFLUENCES

The Western world has been anything but sensitive to the particularities of ethnic conflict and calls for nationalism in the post-communist world. Policymakers and diplomats of the United States and Western Europe especially, have contributed to the presentation of the idea that ethnic conflict is extremely rigid and difficult to assess, much less treat. When this occurs, a false consensus among policymakers is established, thereby preventing a more critical understanding of identity politics and nationalism from emerging. Consider the following statement, for example:

Warren Christopher, whose expert status derived from his position as Secretary of State, announced on the MacNeil-Lehrer NewsHour that Washington could do nothing because all groups in Yugoslavia were consumed by “ancient hatreds” (Sadkovich, 1998: 19).

Such statements are not uncommon and are not limited to state-level representatives. During the 1999 bombing of Serbia I can recall numerous U.S. Senators who in television/radio interviews presented their understanding of Balkan conflict as one reaching far back into world history. This is dangerous, namely because it influences the construction of a narrow foreign policy which neglects to address the more crucial factors underpinning conflicts such as those based on identity. Ultimately, the U.S./NATO response to events in Serbia consisted of a relentless bombing campaign, supposedly to defend the victims of ethnic cleansing. Yet, as anyone who even modestly continues to follow events in the region realizes, mutual hostilities and mutual distrust have remained, if not increased. This only reinforces the misguided belief that identity-based conflicts are tremendously difficult to treat and therefore usually must lead to physical conflicts.

Moreover, by responding to ethnic conflicts (such as those in the Balkans) with militaristic choices, states such as the U.S. and regional bodies such as NATO leave little room for diplomacy. Some scholars have even held the belief that the Western world has
been too slow to produce a more definitive end, militarily, to ethnic conflicts in the post-communist world (Dawisha and Parrot, 1997: 8-9). This is especially contradictory, given the plurality of policymakers who do not even accept that such conflicts can be ended in a conclusive manner. At the same time, I am not denying the severity of atrocities committed in regions such as the Balkans with respect to ethnic conflict. However, I am suggesting that the Western world has failed to address conflicts in the post-communist states in such a way that outright violence and conflict will be discouraged. For example, by observing Western/NATO military intervention members of the Balkans might be more inclined to believe that physical force still remains a practical means of treating disagreements: If the West can be militaristic, then should not the Balkans engage in physical conflict as well? The Western world, in my assessment, has yet to serve as an enviable international role model. As mentioned earlier, identities are capable of change; this includes the notion of victim/oppressor. For example, at present both ethnic Albanians and Serbs have been victims and oppressors in the aftermath of the NATO bombing campaign of 1999.

It also is ironic that NATO, instituted to serve as a Cold War deterrent, engaged in its most elaborate, expensive campaign not during the Cold War but during the Kosovo conflict. What does this reveal about Western intentions? On one level it demonstrates that the West will continue to present ethnic conflict in post-communist states as deeply-rooted and difficult to treat, for the sake of its own political purposes. Since the end of the Cold War the U.S. in particular has been searching for a new means by which to define the "enemy" in international politics. Or at the least, it has been searching for a new rival. Despite the absence of the Soviet Union it is entirely possible that the U.S. will use regional conflicts such as those in the Balkans in order to define its international objectives and purposes. This would allow it to justify a broad range of international military activity. But this leaves little room for productive diplomacy in treating the underlying factors of ethnic mobilization and calls for nationalism in the post-communist world.
Equally problematic is the Western attempt to impose its own brand of democracy upon the post-communist states, many which have little or no experience with this institution. Without question, this in and of itself also relates to political identity because while sub-national groups are experiencing changes in how they perceive themselves, they often are expected to acquire democratic characteristics (Dawisha, 1997: 4). This can be painfully difficult given that they also must undergo processes of economic privatization and the construction of new state administrative institutions. Hence, the order in which the West has advocated the post-communist transition does not necessarily represent the most practical means.

Nor have the Western media offered a fundamental evaluation of the nature of ethnic conflict and nationalistic calls. We live in an age where the media—especially the television media, possess an increasing monopoly on what is defined as critical news (Dawisha, 1997: 137). When conflicts in the abroad occur, audiences tend to perceive those receiving most attention as the only or central conflicts occurring in the world at a given time. This escalates our understanding of how severe such conflicts are, thus allowing us to cast doubt upon the degree to which they can be remedied. Moreover, when particular conflicts such as those in Bosnia or Kosovo occur audiences are deprived of news equally if not more severe with respect to events in other regions. As Quester warns, “the commitment of the American public to the components of the former Soviet Union will be shockingly uneven” (Quester, quoted in Dawisha, 1997: 137).

A further problem with respect to the international influence upon the politics of identity in post-communist states relates to NATO intentions. Since 1994 the U.S. and Western Europe actively have sought to increase NATO membership by including states formerly of the Warsaw Pact. Although NATO has yet to subsume all of the states which it deems fit to be members, its intentions have had a profoundly negative impact upon reactions in post-communist states, namely Russia (See Dawisha, 1997: 68-100). NATO's
plans, though, for increasing its membership also have had an iminical effect upon those states which it does not yet consider fit for membership. In other words, by refusing to invite certain states to join it reinforces the notion that there is a fundamental identity-based difference between NATO and non-NATO states. Furthermore, the desire to expand NATO still serves as somewhat of a contradiction: the purpose for which it initially was designed is no longer relevant, yet the world is expected to believe that there are other states or regions creating an equally volatile security threat as the USSR was thought to pose (1997: 69). In some ways this is just what the West has done by relying upon a NATO alliance to engage in recent ethnic conflicts in the Balkans—that is, it has created a new adversary.

In matters of identity-based conflicts the West has been particularly insensitive toward Russian perspectives. During the Kosovo crisis Russia expressed its disapproval concerning the bombing of the former Yugoslavia. Although the West and NATO have sought to establish a better relationship since the end of the Cold War, the West clearly ignored Russian pleas during the conflict in Kosovo. Instead, it leaned toward acceptance of the belief that the Russian government was quite sympathetic to the Milosevic regime. However, this is not entirely accurate. During the spring of 1999 scholarship from the Center for Democracy in DC revealed that Russians were more attached to the prospects for safety with respect to Serbian citizens—not necessarily Milosevic. By refusing to give serious attention to the Russian position during the Kosovo conflict, the West contributed heavily to its own role as a determinant in how ethnic conflict in the former Yugoslavia would be perceived—that is, less as a product of elite ambitions and more as a product of natural hatreds.

A more recent Western construct has been that of the “rogue” state. This concept is especially baffling, yet members of the First World such as the United States and Great

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9 I first became aware of this through an interview with an unnamed senior policy analyst at the Center for Democracy, on CNN/Headline News 5 May 1999.
Britain use it freely as if they have an airtight grasp upon its meaning. Diplomats and heads of state tend to use the term "rogue state" to refer to a specific nation not of the First World, which they perceive to have the tremendous potential for instigating serious international security conflicts. Often times these states' regimes and their activities tend to be virtually boycotted by powers such as the U.S. The term rogue state, however, only recently has been used in its present context. In fact, it has been reshaped over the past twenty years and has acquired its new meaning in the post-Cold War era. A handful of U.S. Secretaries of State has contributed to the contemporary usage of "rogue" state. All of them have presumed that such states have tremendously "irrational" (Mufson 2000: A1) policy intentions, to the point where they would risk self-destruction in order to defy the First World.¹⁰ Yet, in a concise piece for the Washington Post, Mufson suggests that rogue states actually are concerned with self-perpetuation. Furthermore, various scholars have posited that the concept of the rogue state has acted as a post-Cold War device used to justify defense system proposals, as well as a general need to define the present-day enemy (2000: A1). Examples of rogue states include Iran, Iraq and North Korea.

Although the former Yugoslavia does not seem to meet the direct criteria of being a rogue state (such as the capability to produce nuclear warheads/technology), my point is that members of the international community (namely in the West) have appointed categories for states which possess characteristics diametrically opposite to their own. Obviously, this does not excuse the threat of nuclear war. However, it implies that members of the Western world have labeled national communities on the basis of the actions of their leaders, who do not necessarily represent the interests of the masses. Should Serbia qualify as a rogue state because of the actions of the Milosevic regime? This calls into question the rigidity and structure of what is deemed a nation-state. Do all of the members of the nation and the state

¹⁰ Note the U.S. preoccupation with the concept of rationality/irrationality—a fundamental concept to traditional theoretical approaches such as neorealism.
become rogues because of the decisions of their ruling administration? How well does the stigma of “rogue state” represent the collectivities of people comprising a nation-state? Just consider the stereotypical representations of people from different ethnic backgrounds whose states of origin have been labeled “terrorist” states.

Concepts such as the rogue state act as a means by which members of the international community construct the international identity of other states. Taken by themselves, without a point of reference, no state is of the First World, the Third World or even a rogue state. But when powers such as those of the West decide to appoint labels to other states, they contribute to the subordination/marginalization of those states. Practically speaking, it still is dangerous to label the former Yugoslavia a land of renegade factions as this only complicates any prospects for addressing security issues in the region with a critical eye toward achieving and maintaining an eventual peace. Mufson asks, for example, why the U.S. does not maintain a uniform policy approach to states which they “could just as easily call... rogue states” (2000: A1), such as India. One valid response lies in the notion that the First World consciously and unconsciously chooses how to define other states.

Scholars and policymakers also must reflect upon the nature of Western intentions with respect to involvement in recent Balkan conflicts. Has Western/NATO “peacekeeping” been exclusively about preserving lives in the Balkans, or has it also represented a desire for regions such as Europe to bolster and defend the ideals they supposedly represent? As Ignatieff points out, an array of European scholars was reluctant to scrutinize the potential for Balkan conflict prior to the Bosnian war. Yet the onset of hostilities has prompted many of them to assess the region very closely in an effort to reinvigorate “European” values such as sympathy/concern for the other (Ignatieff in Danchev and Halverson, 1996: xi).

Ignatieff also is quick to illustrate the nature of Western intervention in recent Balkan conflicts. In one sense our efforts to treat unstable situations in regions such as the former Yugoslavia have worked to prolong more peaceful resolutions. For example, during the
Bosnian war a number of food supplies intended for refugees accidentally became directed toward militants partaking in the repression of Bosnian Muslims. Ignatieff suggests that the Western world has been willing to provide a minimum, basic line of defense for potential victims of practices such as genocide. At the same time, however, it has been reluctant to directly confront those leaders (e.g., Milosevic) who have been greatly responsible for such practices (Ignatieff in Danchev and Halverson, 1996: xiv). Has Western/NATO involvement in Balkan conflict actually represented a form of "narcissism" (1996: xi)?

But NATO is not the only Western institution/regime to have contributed to prolonging Balkan conflict. Take, as another example, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). Its action (or inaction) has been illustrative of counterproductive decisions with respect to regional conflicts. By exploring the "Ten Principles Guiding Relations Among States" (CSCE, 1997: 9) for the OSCE, it can be seen that such a framework is narrow enough to prevent compliance among human rights violators from being enforced. The first six principles essentially call for protection of state sovereignty and territorial integrity, continued non-intervention, peaceful conflict resolution and restraint from the use of force against other states (1997: 9). Hence, it is expected that the organizational and institutional structures of the OSCE—including tribunals, arbiters and shaming mechanisms11 will assist in yielding compliance with human rights treaties and statements such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

This however does not work well in practice. Although treaties in theory represent contractual obligations between states in which it is agreed upon that some infringement of sovereignty will occur (Donnelly, 1998: 27), the case of the former Yugoslavia reveals itself as lacking the treaties which could have prevented more recent atrocities. With respect to other institutional mechanisms such as tribunals, it is apparent that legal rulings can be

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11 Shaming mechanisms include for example the publishing of reports that cite violations and noncompliance within a given state.
rendered but certainly not enforced when states such as Serbia clinging to the principle of sovereignty (CSCE, 1996: 16). Hence, much like decisions taken by the various structures of the United Nations, judgments made by the OSCE can serve as recommendations but cannot necessarily be enforced without some form of sanctions or external involvement within states committing the greatest human rights abuses.

The point here is that when political stakes are high enough states do infringe upon the sovereignty of other states or at least pressure them to allow their sovereignty to be compromised. However, the West tends to perceive the issue of human rights enforcement as one not requiring the same attention that other issues demand, such as security, economics or even the environment. Hence sovereignty, as protected by the compact of the OSCE, rarely encounters interference generated by human rights issues.

Within the five years prior to the onset of the Bosnian war U.S. participation in the OSCE gave tremendous attention to Russia as communism began to wither. Yearly reports of U.S. activity during this time suggest that the former Yugoslavia was not taken seriously as an area of potential instability (CSCE, 1988: 11-16). The OSCE demonstrated an awareness of the need to encourage economic development in the Balkans and Eastern Europe, but trade policy concerns ultimately were directed toward relations with the soon to be defunct Soviet Union. With respect to human rights awareness, greater concentration was placed upon the issue of forced labor in the Soviet Union (1988: 16), but the OSCE generally overlooked the precursors to abuses in the former Yugoslavia.

Analyzing the Kosovo conflict challenges some of the traditional assumptions about the nature of human rights protection relative to the international community, as discussed earlier. Though it is assumed that human rights violations are practices occurring within the boundaries of sovereign nations directed by repressive internal regimes, the recent conflict adds a new dimension: what happens when international actors contribute to a regime’s decision to enact human rights violations?
Prior to the onset of the 1999 air strikes U.S. Secretary of State Albright participated in an effort to impose a directive upon the Milosevic regime. This directive gave preference to the rebel group, Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA), which previously was considered to have been an impediment to any peaceful settlement between Milosevic and Kosovo President Rugova. Moreover, the U.S. brand of diplomacy demanded that a peace settlement would have to include NATO ground forces with the goal of attaining statehood for Kosovo within the next few years (Kuperman, 1999: A20). Obviously this strategy was unsuccessful and if anything, it might have helped to augment the intensity of the Kosovo crisis.

It is by no means my intention to exonerate Milosevic or his regime. To the contrary he has been an obstacle to peace and an impediment to the cause of human rights. Nonetheless, the U.S. played a significant role in fueling Milosevic's decision to employ ethnic cleansing within Kosovo. Had the U.S. forsaken the ultimatum made to the Serbs, it is entirely possible that even Milosevic would have decided not to rely upon ethnic cleansing given that no massive atrocities had been undertaken against the Kosovars since he came to power in the late 1980's (Kuperman, 1999: A20).

What I am suggesting here is that the Western world and its institutions/regimes such as the OSCE have been guilty in part for fabricating the circumstances under which human rights abuses could occur. For those who still are unconvinced that it is feasible to infringe upon sovereignty in order to enforce human rights, it should be noted that an irony exists in that principles such as those of the OSCE, which have endorsed diplomacy, have been ignored by the NATO alliance. Yet this type of infringement has had counterproductive results to date.

In tying the Kosovo crisis to the matter of human rights it can be seen that atrocities within the territorial space of one state can elicit attention and action from other states. Our sense of "duty" in terms of this conflict stems from the U.S./West's refusal to assess critically the circumstances in the former Yugoslavia. In turn, this refusal has allowed for
human rights violations to occur. Hence, the Western world has helped make the human rights aspect of the Kosovo conflict a concern. Consequently, some even argue that we (meaning the U.S.) have thus imposed upon ourselves the obligation to contribute economically to those ethnic Albanians who have been displaced by the Serb military (Kuperman, 1999: A20).

With respect to the dissolution of Yugoslavia at the beginning of this decade the malleable nature of sovereignty is readily apparent. The creation of independent states such as Serbia as well as the creation of autonomous provinces tied to such states (e.g. Kosovo) demonstrates how sovereignty was fabricated. Put another way, it was by virtue of political and economic elites that the new sovereign entities of the former Yugoslavia were designed. Sovereignty relied upon the performative acts of such elites. This resulted in “a bewildering alteration of political boundaries” (Forsythe, 1994: 119), clearly exemplifying how sovereign polities are constructed.

What I am suggesting here is that just as vigorously as elites defined the new sovereign states of the Balkans, international bodies such as the United Nations and the OSCE could have intervened within such states in order to ensure greater human rights protection. The OSCE, for example, pledges not to breach the sovereignty of other nations. But at the time of the formation of the new Yugoslav states sovereignty temporarily had lost its determinacy. This is when international action to prevent instability could have been employed in order to enforce human rights compliance.

Where the OSCE is concerned, it could have played a significant role in trying to better guarantee human rights protection. One such means could have included a recommendation by the OSCE to the West to insist that “legal recognition” (Forsythe, 1994: 120) of Yugoslav states be made contingent upon human rights compliance. The same could have applied to the issue of delegating foreign economic assistance to such states, although sanctions are by no means the most efficacious means of conducting international affairs.
Nevertheless, the West was not paralyzed in its position relative to the formation of sovereign states within the former Yugoslavia. This is especially so in light of the incentive to acquire membership within the European Union. If states such as Serbia wish to become privileged members of the EU they could be prompted to comply with human rights accords and agreements.

If sovereignty largely is a function of mutual recognition between states as Biersteker and Weber argue (Biersteker and Weber, 1996: 2-3), then it can be seen that the West was not powerless with respect to the rise of oppressive state regimes such as that of Milosevic. Granted, this model does not apply to all scenarios. It would be difficult to assert that the international community could adopt the same attitude toward China in light of its human rights violations. However, the difference between China and the recently (re)formed states of the Balkans rests upon the realization that the West could have prevented states such as Serbia from becoming repressive given Serbia’s need for sovereign recognition after the breakup of Yugoslavia. More broadly, the issue of sovereignty and its potential infringement with respect to human rights abuses suggests that a little infringement now can prevent the need for greater infringement later.
CHAPTER 10

CONCLUDING REMARKS

In light of the means by which identity-based conflict and calls for nationalism have been constructed throughout various regions of the post-communist world, what prospects remain for peace? One response is that the entire notion of “transition” from the Cold War era begs further analysis (Bova, 1991: 113). In this regard, one might address the post-communist transition by asking, “transition to what”? Although the centrality of having democratic institutions has arisen throughout the former communist order, not all such institutions have been successful. Hence, by assuming that “transition” necessarily implies democratic transition we are entering uncertain territory. Scholars and policymakers need to be more careful in generating expectations about the nature of the transition. With weak informal and civil associations and institutions (Di Palma, 1991: 49), regional elites continue to usurp power and exercise their desire to maintain authority. As it stands, political and economic elites have retained far too much of this capacity.

A stronger civil society might serve as a better mechanism for developing a national outlook which takes into account a greater spectrum of the citizenry without politicizing identity, although this is far from a cure-all. Buttressing civil society would entail assurances that key elements such as free speech would not be hindered (Frentzel-Zagorska, 1990: 759) or that citizens would seek to become eligible for voting. Indeed, there have been stronger prospects for informal associations among citizens of the post-communist order. Even prior to the fall of the Soviet Union evidence indicates a dramatic increase in unofficial associations within Russia, many which sought to become legitimate before the eyes of the Soviet government. In turn, these relationships tended to provide communist elites with a sense of unsteadiness (Brovkin, 1990: 233). This indicates the need for a strengthening of such associations throughout the post-communist world so as to pose a challenge to current political and economic elites. However, the role of civil society is not to
be overemphasized. It too can be heavily problematic for the development of nation-states given that the entire concept of civil-society encompasses not only peaceful and progressive, but also dangerous and oppressive groups such as mobs.

This section has been designated “Concluding Remarks” but not “Conclusion” so as not to imply that I have chosen a rigid, definitive or narrow set of corollaries with respect to the nature of identity-based politics and nationalism in the post-Cold War world. To the contrary, scholarly and practical analyses of this topic are by no means complete. The nature of identity-based politics is not static. A more critical understanding of topics such as identity and nationalism entails not only intense research but the willingness of scholars and practitioners to welcome the more robust alternatives to the traditional approaches driving international relations (and International Relations).

Where then, does contemporary scholarly and practical attention to identity-based conflict leave us? Consider the opening passage of this paper, on the theoretical side, from Lake and Rothchild:

The most widely discussed explanations of ethnic conflict are, at best... wrong. Ethnic conflict is not caused directly by inter-group differences, “ancient hatreds” and centuries-old feuds... Nor were ethnic passions, long bottled up by repressive communist regimes, simply uncorked by the end of the Cold War. (Lake and Rothchild, 1996)

At first glance this statement would appear to fall well within the parameters of a more critical outlook upon identity-based conflict. However, Lake and Rothchild’s analysis still reflects a general trend which seeks to assume a tremendous amount of predictive power for future outcomes in international affairs. Although they are careful not to accept the ancient hatreds argument, the authors admittedly employ a rational-choice approach to assessing identity-based, or more specifically, ethnic conflict (1996: 42). This approach stems from their assumption that ethnic groups will react to the uncertainty of the future (in the context of the post-Cold War). And although the authors acknowledge the role of elite-based manipulation, ultimately they introduce a linear model of historical progression in which
actors behave in one manner as a result of their pure self-interest. Furthermore, Lake and Rothchild attribute accountability to elites with respect to the management of ethnic conflict as well (1996: 42). This leaves us with a vague sense of which elites are responsible for inducing conflict and those which are responsible for trying to quell it. Are they responsible for both?

In short, Lake and Rothchild make a strong contribution to the literature on identity-based conflict but they do not completely break free of the rational-choice hold. By grounding their efforts in an attempt to seek out the origins of ethnic conflict they exhibit a preference to overemphasize the search for beginnings. Such an attempt neglects the importance of a more genealogical approach to identity-based conflict. Moreover, scholars and practitioners of international affairs must wonder what happens when a rational-choice paradigm such as that of Lake and Rothchild does not apply to situations in which the authors contend that it would. By no means have all states of the post-communist world suffered from undying ethnic/identity-based conflict. As I mentioned at the beginning of this writing, the creation of a large-scale paradigm which universalizes the origins of identity-based conflict is not my intention. Such an effort would be futile.

On the practical side, media-oriented accounts of recent identity-based conflicts such as those in the Balkans continue to emphasize with vigor the role of complex, lengthy histories. Even in the midst of the Kosovo conflict of 1999, efforts were made by the print media to describe the historical complexities troubling Serbs and Albanians with regard to territorial claims over areas within the former Yugoslavia. One such account brings the reader back to the Twelfth Century in order to trace the origins of present-day ethnic conflict (Perlez, 1999). Granted, the manipulative strength of leaders such as Milosevic is acknowledged, but media representations such as this continue to suggest that populations neatly maintain an awareness of their nation's past such that this knowledge impels them to support nationalistic policies. Very rarely does the media attempt to reverse this conception and
posit that manipulative elites draw upon the subjectivity of history in order to pursue survival or their own objectives. Rather, they inject a strong pessimistic outlook upon regional affairs and insist that nothing but "resentment and hostility" (Kinzer, 1992) consume areas suffering from identity-based conflicts. From a more critical perspective, other media representations have given credence to the notion that present-day identity-based conflict and nationalism in the Balkans are the result of contemporary political ambitions (Kaufman, 1992). Still others have professed the belief that the U.S./NATO coalition has been far too impatient in pursuing a peaceful outcome in the Balkans—one not obsessed with racial divisions (Rosenfeld, 2000: A35). Again, it is not my intention to deny the importance of history or to eliminate its validity. However, it also is crucial to scrutinize how history has been re-presented to the masses.

With respect to foreign policymakers and diplomats, a more critical understanding of identity-based conflict continues to be ignored. At the international level, the Western world, including its NATO forces, has transformed the Kosovo conflict into a dispute over how best to manage its aftermath, and whom should be responsible for such management. Put another way, the "NATO allies are fighting among themselves over how to keep a deteriorating situation in the Serbian province from spinning out of their control" (Perlez, 2000). Balkan instability, then, has become highly politicized to the point where the U.S. and other leading states of the West have been consumed by protecting their own interests. More particularly, the U.S. has sought to diminish the publicity of failed military efforts in the Balkans so as to evade negative exposure in upcoming national elections (2000).

Meanwhile, unrest between Serbs and Kosovars continues but Western politics assert themselves over the security of an otherwise insecure region.

Returning to the case of the Baltics, similar portrayals of the volatility of ethnic conflict have pervaded media analyses. Such representations warn of the brewing conflicts between ethnic Russians living in the abroad. Interestingly, a Russia Today article uses the term
“powder keg” (Pounsett, 1998) to describe the nature of this situation—the same term employed by Larrabee in his edited volume to which I made reference earlier. At the same time, however, articles such as this also have been willing to concede that the concept of identity throughout the former Soviet states now is a sensitive topic because of the means by which identity was assigned to citizens during the Soviet era (1998). In other words, there are indications that media analysts are aware of the highly constructed nature of identity in the post-communist world.

One of the driving claims behind this writing has been that theory and practice are not unrelated. Nor should they be estranged from one another. This paper largely has been about the Balkans and the Baltics, but it also is intended to be an exercise in better understanding the relationship between theoretical approaches in IR and practical applications in ir. There is a strong prevalence of what I have referred to as the “traditional” theoretical approaches in present-day policymaking within and between nation-states. Such a connection between these two entities obligates us to acknowledge that theory and practice are not disconnected from each other. With this in mind, however, scholars and practitioners of international affairs have little reason to rest and remain content with the dominant approaches of conducting relations between states. It is for this reason that the value of critical studies and appraisals of international affairs is just beginning to gain recognition. International relations and international relations have not exhausted themselves of fresh perspectives. How much progress they can achieve will depend upon the willingness of scholars and practitioners to open up a dialogue with challenging approaches.
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